Welcome to this journey!

This guide offers resources and ideas for leaders throughout the diocese – to adapt our shared pilgrimage to your local context and needs, and specifically to the season of Lent. You will find in this guide and on diobeth.org:

- Background and context for our diocesan pilgrimage
- Participant materials for five weekly sessions – designed for small groups, forums, etc.
- Ideas for adapting materials to various contexts
- Resources and ideas for children and youth
- “Called To Be A Pilgrim,” a resource for prayer, worship, and commissioning
- Prayers for pilgrimage

Background on our Diocesan Pilgrimage

In the Summer of 2015, Bishop Sean Rowe, our Bishop Provisional, invited the Rev. Charles Cesaretti and The Very Rev. Tony Pompa, two clergy of our diocese, to create a process for the members of our diocese to faithfully explore and discern God’s Spirit and direction for our future. The theme and metaphor of Pilgrimage quickly presented itself in this planning, as it provides for us the spirit of a “holy walk we take together, opening ourselves to how God will choose to reveal Godself to us in this journey.” The hope for the journey is that we will as a diocese:

1. Grow closer to God
2. Grow closer to one another
3. Be open anew as a diocese to God’s call to us to pursue our mission
Bishop Sean, in a video post released to the diocese on the Feast of the Epiphany, calls us to this journey. You can view the video by visiting diobeth.org and clicking on “Pilgrimage.” In the video, Bishop Sean responds to these questions:

- Why are we going on pilgrimage?
- Where are we going?
- How can we participate?

**Why are we going on Pilgrimage?**

“The Diocese of Bethlehem is bold in choosing this time to uphold our personal and corporate spirituality and investing in a process to discover anew God’s preferred future for us as a diocese.”

**Where are we going?**

“On this journey, we create the road as we walk it.”

“I hope pilgrimage leads us to a place within ourselves personally, within our parishes, and as a diocese, where our imaginations are opened to consider a future God would have us, a ‘place’ we’ve never considered before.”

Where we are going is a place of discovery.

“I would challenge us to let go of any past image we have of ourselves as individuals, congregations, and diocese, good or bad. Not to look back to a path in the past we loved or even something we’d like to shed because we didn’t love it, but rather to look to God to direct us to something entirely new, knowing God always accompanies us on our journey.”

**How can we participate?**

We can all participate in this journey, by participating as individuals in our prayers, following the Pilgrimage Blog on diobeth.org or the Diocesan Facebook page, by engaging one another on the parish level in our Lenten Study, and by gathering congregation members regionally (this spring) for prayerful conversation.

You can participate by committing yourself individually to see this time as an opportunity to grow in God’s spirit.

We can participate by engaging in a three-fold, prayerful examination that asks,

- How is God stirring me?
- How is God stirring my congregation?
- How is God stirring us, as a diocese?
LENTEN RESOURCES

Lenten resources have been prepared to offer tools for congregational study and conversation. The core framework is a series of five sessions, designed around gospel stories, with a pilgrimage theme for reflection each week: hunger, vulnerability, openings, clarity, and arrival. Each one of these invites reflection on personal, parish, and diocesan levels.

These resources are intended to be flexible and adaptable. Each of the five “segments” or “movements” includes a pattern of prayer, scripture reading, and reflection questions. You will find in this guide additional resources to adjust and expand the format as you choose, including use with children and youth.

Locating the Lenten Resources

Resources are located on the diobeth.org website and available as free, PDF-format files that may be downloaded and copied or adapted for your use. If you are having difficulty accessing the files, please contact a member of the Lenten Resources team, listed at the end of this guide. In addition to this guide, resources include:

- A series of five participant handouts
- “Called To Be A Pilgrim” worship resource
- Resource guide for children and youth
- “I Am A Pilgrim” and other prayers

Adapting the Lenten Resources

The materials offered – including five different participant handouts – were designed as series for Lent and as a springboard for other use. If you can bring people together for a three-week series instead of five, do that. If snow keeps people inside, ask families and neighborhood groups to follow along at home. Each participant guide can also stand alone for gatherings that are not weekly. These may also be used for individual reflection, too. Consider using and adapting the materials provided for:

- Sunday morning “adult forum” or education time
- Sunday school for children and youth; youth group
- “Coffee hour” inter-generational fellowship and conversation following worship
- Parish dinners – as guides for table conversation
- Mid-week gatherings in Lent – perhaps with a soup supper or evening prayer
- Small groups, meeting in homes or at your church for fellowship and study
- Bible study group
- Prayer groups
- Monthly meetings in Lent: vestry, committees, etc. (select one per meeting)
- Retreat, expanding the exploration of one theme or incorporating multiple ones
- Parish communications – using excerpts in bulletins, newsletters, website, Facebook
Participant Guides

You will find on the diocesan website (diobeth.org) five participant handouts, as PDF files to download. Each are presented as two pages, intended to be copied front-and-back and folded in half. The scripture passage on the front and the “Focus Question” offer a simple format that can be completed in about 45 minutes (depending on group size). Suggestions and tips for leaders:

Opening – We suggest opening with the diocesan prayer for pilgrimage, printed on the back of the participant guide. You may choose to light a candle, invite petitions for prayer, or add other elements to your opening ritual.

Scripture – Each guide includes a short passage of scripture, printed on the front of the handouts. These have been selected to focus conversation, so that participants may consider the scripture in the context of their own lives, personally and corporately. Inside the guide, you will find an “Expanded Text” listing, as well as “Text Notes,” which provide background for the selected scripture. If you are using this guide in the context of bible study (and if your allotted time permits), you may want to read the expanded text and consult various translations or more extensive background resources. Consider having someone read the focus text aloud, then give time for silent reflection. You may use the practice of lectio divina, and ask participants to share a word or phrase after the first reading, then read aloud a second time, allowing additional silence before discussion.

Themes – Each guide introduces a theme of pilgrimage, illuminated by the text: hunger, vulnerability, openings, clarity, and arrival. As time permits, you may incorporate additional resources, such as poetry and music, to explore these themes. Some suggestions are included in this guide, and you are encouraged to share ideas on the diocesan Facebook page.

Discussion – A focus question is included in each guide, with encouragement to share reflections, discussion, and engage this aspect of spiritual pilgrimage in a three-fold, prayerful examination that explores how God is at work in us and stirring us as individuals, parishes, and our diocese. Additional questions are listed to prompt deeper discussion, which may be especially useful if you have more than an hour. If your group is large, you may want to form smaller discussion circles. Consider ways to encourage participation by all in your group, with their various learning and conversational styles; this may include allowing intentional time in silent reflection before conversation, encouraging participants to make a few notes before discussion begins, intentionally taking turns to speak, and establishing time for each participant. Be mindful of your time allowance for discussion and appoint a time keeper, as needed; use a chime or incorporate other practices to be sure all have an opportunity to speak and to be heard.

Closing – A closing practice of prayer is encouraged, and a suggested prayer form is offered with each guide.
Children and Youth

Perhaps you have an adult group meeting for dinner and discussion on a weeknight and you want to provide an opportunity to have children and youth participate. Or perhaps you would like to use the Lenten Pilgrimage during Sunday school in Lent. Either way, here are some suggestions to adapt it for children and youth.

Begin by reviewing the Lenten Resources in the preceding sections of this guide (pages 3-4), and familiarizing yourself with the themes, scripture readings, and focus questions. When adapting this format for children and youth there are a few things to consider. Is it a mixed age group? Do you have elementary-age kids or middle and high school students? Here you will find suggestions for elementary school children and for a tween/teen group. If you have a mixed age group, you may want to use elements from both.

The format that has been set up for the Lenten Pilgrimage is also great for children and youth. It provides the consistency of a seasonal series and allows for a defined structure, with beginning, middle, ending for your time together.

• You can begin your time with an opening prayer. For young children, it is great to get them involved. You can use an “echo prayer,” where the children repeat after you line by line. This a great way to get them focused. For older youth, you could use the opening prayer that the adults are using.

• After the opening prayer you can read the scripture aloud. So that you have a defined focus and are able to keep their attention, it is recommended that you limit the reading to the focus verses (on the front of each week’s handout).

• Next, you can follow one of the activities listed in the supplemental resources for children and youth (see diobeth.org for a PDF to download), or use a focus question to get conversation going. With older youth, you will want to help them to see how they are part of a larger picture. How they can view this question in terms of themselves, their church, and the diocese?

• After the activity or conversation has concluded, you can join back together for a moment of quiet reflection.

• Lastly, end with a closing ritual. This can be something like lighting a candle and saying a closing prayer (or if you light a candle at the beginning, extinguish it after a closing prayer); or holding hands in a circle and, beginning with the leader, invite each person to offer a prayer for the person to their left and pass a “squeeze” around the circle until it gets back to the leader, then the leader can say “Amen.”

On diobeth.org you will find a resource which includes additional, week-by-week suggestions of activities and questions especially designed for children and youth.
Additional Resources

We very much encourage the showing of Bishop Sean’s Epiphany Day video, inviting us to Pilgrimage, at the beginning of your journey. We recommend you find someone in your congregation who is computer savvy and who can make this happen for you. Show this at the beginning of a Lenten series, after church one Sunday, at a parish dinner, vestry meeting, and/or retreat.

Include a link on your parish website or share on Facebook. If showing the video is not possible, a summary is included in the introduction to this guide (see “About this Pilgrimage”). You may want to read or make copies of this for participants.

During Lent, we will also be posting supplemental resources, such as links for suggested prayers, poetry, and music, on the diocesan Facebook page and website (diobeth.org).

Communications

Consider using the materials provided to enhance parish communications. Especially in our winter “desert” of Lent, ice and snow may bring challenges in getting people together for mid-week reflection or even to church every Sunday, and supplemental communications can help us all continue to journey on this pilgrimage together.

- Print the two-page, folded, participant guide as an insert for worship bulletins
- Use excerpts in newsletters (electronic and printed)
- Post the weekly questions on your parish Facebook page and invite conversation
- Use the material as prompts for reflective essays and blogs (and sermons!)
- Add material to your parish website; include links to resources on diobeth.org
- Challenge participants to share their reflections in print or on social media
- Invite participants to share brief testimonials in worship
- Post the reflection questions on a bulletin board and invite people to add comments

We especially encourage postings on the Episcopal Diocese of Bethlehem’s Facebook page, which will help grow the conversation throughout our diocese, as we make pilgrimage together.

Feedback

We would love to hear about your conversations, reflections, and the stirrings of our collective imaginations! The diocesan Facebook page allows us to experience the feedback together, while we travel alongside one another.

For those without access to such, we would love for the Shepherds in your congregations to send summary statements of your experience to: Tpompa@nativitycathedral.org

Blessed Journey.
If you have questions, please contact any of the design team members:

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